

NAVIGATING SEL FROM THE INSIDE OUT

LOOKING INSIDE & ACROSS 25 LEADING SEL PROGRAMS:
A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS AND OST PROVIDERS

(ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOCUS)

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Stephanie Jones, Katharine Brush, Rebecca Bailey, Gretchen Brion-Meisels,
Joseph McIntyre, Jennifer Kahn, Bryan Nelson, and Laura Stickle

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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THE MUTT-I-GREES CURRICULUM

I. PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum is a PreK-12 program that combines social and emotional learning with humane education, building on children's love of animals to promote social-emotional competence, academic achievement, and awareness of the needs of shelter pets. Mutt-i-grees' elementary school curriculum is grouped into two kits: PreK-Grade 3 and Grades 4-6, with separate lessons for students in PreK-K, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, and Grade 6. Each grade range includes 25 scripted weekly lessons across 5 units designed to teach students about shelter dogs in ways that help them navigate interactions with both people and animals. Lessons last approximately 30 minutes and typically include an introduction, discussion, activity related to the lesson theme, and wrap-up. Family involvement, community outreach, and opportunities for service learning are built into the lessons. Each unit also includes Dog Dialog lessons that teach students about dog behavior in order to promote positive interactions with animals. Developed by the Pet Savers Foundation and Yale University of the 21st Century with initial funding from the Cesar Millan Foundation.

Grade Range	PreK-12 with separate lessons for Pre-K-K, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, and Grade 6				
Duration and Timing	25 weeks; 1 lesson/week; 30 min/lesson				
Areas of Focus (as stated by program)	Self-awareness; emotion identification, expression, and management; empathy, perspective-taking, and appreciation for diversity; cooperative and caring relationships; communication skills; and problem-solving and decision-making				
Additional Curricula (not included in analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum for Grades 7-8 and 9-12 -Mutt-i-grees in the Library extension kit -Paws Down, Tails Up with Mutt-i-grees physical fitness kit -Cats are Mutt-i-grees 2 companion kit 				
Evidence of Effectiveness	Two internal studies, including one randomized control trial and one non-experimental study				
Skill Focus	Cognitive Regulation	Emotional Processes	Interpersonal Skills	Character	Mindset
	10%	45%	56%	10%	6%
Instructional Methods	Most frequently uses didactic instruction and discussion				
Unique Features Relative to Other Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High emphasis on understanding social cues -Low emphasis on cognitive regulation -High use of didactic instruction (highest) and art/creative projects -Structured OST adaptations provided -Structured activities for community engagement -Less support for academic integration 				

II. EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS¹

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum has been evaluated in two internal studies, including a 2-year randomized study and a non-experimental pilot study. There is also a pilot study underway to evaluate the impact of using a School Dog as part of the program. The primary measures and assessments used in these studies include student self-reports, teacher reports, and principal interviews. Results from the most recent studies are summarized below.

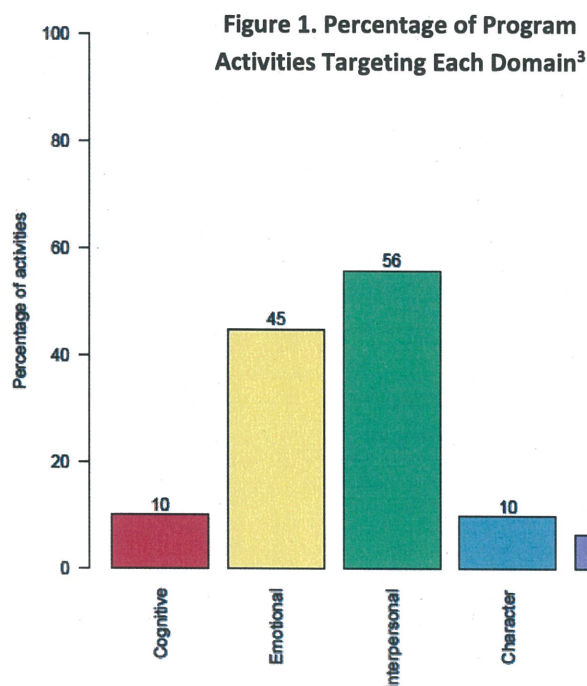
Grades:	PreK-5
Geographic Location:	Urban, rural
Race/Ethnicity:	No information provided.
Free/Reduced Lunch:	70% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gains in empathy; prosocial behavior; social-emotional competence; positive feelings about school and learning; and understanding of shelters, shelter pets, and dogs• Improved job satisfaction, relationships, and beliefs/behaviors that support social and emotional learning among teachers (including discussing/modeling emotions, encouraging students to identify feelings and notice social cues, and considering student feelings and how teacher feelings affect students)• Improved parent involvement in school• Overall reductions in disciplinary referrals and incidences of bullying; reductions in aggression among students with severe behavior problems
Implementation Experiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participating schools used Mutt-i-grees in mainstream and special education classrooms, afterschool programs, and as part of bullying prevention efforts• Of the teachers who participated: 84% implemented lessons at least once per week (28% twice a week); 74% customized lessons by adding materials, activities, or books, or by modifying the lesson script; 32% displayed Mutt-i-grees posters and materials in their classrooms; 32% used strategies from the curriculum when classroom conflicts arose; and 68% discussed topics from the curriculum during other subjects.

¹ References: Yale 21C. (n.d.)

III. CURRICULAR CONTENT²

PROGRAM FOCUS

As shown in Figure 1 below, Mutt-i-grees primarily focuses on interpersonal skills and emotional processes (each targeted by 45-56% of program activities). To a lesser extent, Mutt-i-grees also focuses on cognitive regulation, character, and mindset (each targeted by $\leq 10\%$ of program activities).



Developmental Considerations

Mutt-i-grees provides separate lessons for PreK-K, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, and Grade 6. Notable differences across grades include a higher focus on cognitive regulation and emotional processes in PreK-K.

BREAKDOWN OF SKILLS TARGETED

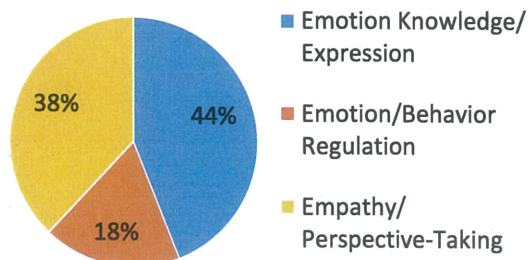
Cognitive Regulation

Mutt-i-grees offers little focus on cognitive regulation (only targeted in 10% of program activities).

Emotional Processes

As shown in Figure 2 to the right, the 45% of Mutt-i-grees activities that build emotional processes most frequently focus on emotion knowledge/expression (44% of the time) and empathy/perspective taking (38%), followed by emotion/behavior regulation (18%). For example, students might make a mobile of emotion words, create a guide to help people anticipate how dogs might feel in various situations, or perform a skit about acceptable vs. unacceptable ways to express a feeling.

Figure 2. Frequency of Skills Targeted by Activities that Build Emotional Processes⁴



² Data collected from Grades 1, 3, and 5.

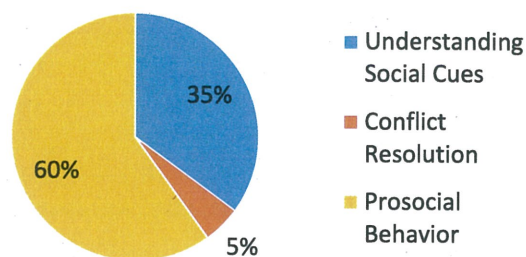
³ A single program activity may target more than one domain. For this reason, the proportions of activities targeting each domain may not add up to 100%.

⁴ Proportions represent how often the program targets a specific skill (e.g., empathy) relative to other skills in the same domain (e.g., emotion/behavior regulation, etc.). For example, if 45% of program activities build emotional processes, 38% of the time, those activities target empathy.

Interpersonal Skills

As shown in Figure 3 to the right, the 56% of Mutt-i-grees activities that build interpersonal skills most frequently focus on prosocial behavior (60% of the time), followed to a lesser extent by understanding social cues (35%). Mutt-i-grees activities that build interpersonal skills rarely addresses conflict resolution (only 5% of the time).

Figure 3. Frequency of Skills Targeted by Activities that Build Interpersonal Skills⁴



Character⁵

Mutt-i-grees offers little to no focus on character (only targeted in 10% of program activities).

Mindset⁵


Mutt-i-grees offers little to no focus on mindset (only targeted in 6% of program activities).

⁵ This profile does not offer a detailed breakdown of how programs target specific skills within the character and mindset domains as this information was not captured in our initial round of data collection. While we are in the process of adapting our data collection system to better summarize information about character and mindset at the skill level, we have provided more general descriptions of how each program tends to address these topics wherever they are targeted by ≥10% of program activities.

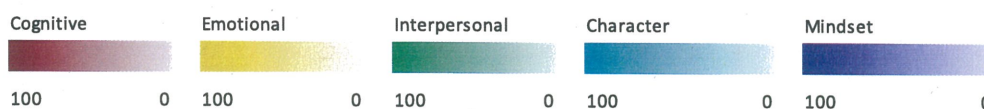
SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF SKILLS

The heat map in Figure 4 below provides a more detailed look at where and when Mutt-i-grees addresses specific skills over the course of 25 weeks, within and across different grades. The vertical progression of the map could be thought of as time, moving from one unit to the next and one grade to the next, with the shading representing degree of concentration in a particular skill at that rough point in time. The map can be used as a planning tool to help practitioners determine where Mutt-i-grees programming might align with specific academic plans, school-wide programming, and social and emotional learning standards throughout the year. (Please see p. 41 for specific examples.)

Figure 4. Heat Map Showing Percent of Program Activities Targeting Each Domain and Skill by Unit, Grade, and Program-wide

TIME (Developmental Progression) 	Grade	Unit	Cognitive Regulation				Emotional Processes			Interpersonal Processes			Character	Mindset
			Attention Control	Working Memory / Planning	Inhibitory Control	Cognitive Flexibility	Emotion Knowledge / Expression	Emotion / Behavior Regulation	Empathy / Perspective-Taking	Understands Social Cues	Conflict Resolution	Prosocial Behavior	Character	Mindset
	PreK-K	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	8	0	0	38	25	21
		2	0	0	0	0	96	46	33	29	0	4	0	4
		3	0	0	0	0	38	0	54	38	17	25	12	0
		4	0	0	0	0	17	0	25	50	0	92	12	0
		5	0	22	39	61	9	17	39	4	0	48	17	0
		A1	0	4	8	13	32	13	32	24	3	41	13	5
		A2	16				53			56			13	5
	Grades 1-3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	12	32
2		0	0	0	0	77	19	12	31	4	0	0	4	
3		0	0	0	0	42	0	62	46	12	27	15	0	
4		8	0	0	0	15	0	27	50	0	85	0	0	
5		0	12	8	12	4	12	4	0	0	46	0	0	
A1		2	2	2	2	28	6	21	26	3	41	6	7	
A2		8				43			57			6	7	
Grades 4-5	1	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	40	24	12	
	2	0	0	0	0	58	58	12	25	8	17	0	8	
	3	0	0	0	0	35	9	61	35	9	13	4	0	
	4	7	0	4	0	18	0	21	36	0	75	7	0	
	5	0	12	4	12	8	12	4	4	0	36	16	16	
	A1	2	3	2	2	24	15	19	20	3	38	10	7	
	A2	6				38			54			10	7	
Program-wide	A1	1	3	4	6	28	11	24	23	3	40	10	6	
	A2	10				45			56			10	6	

Key



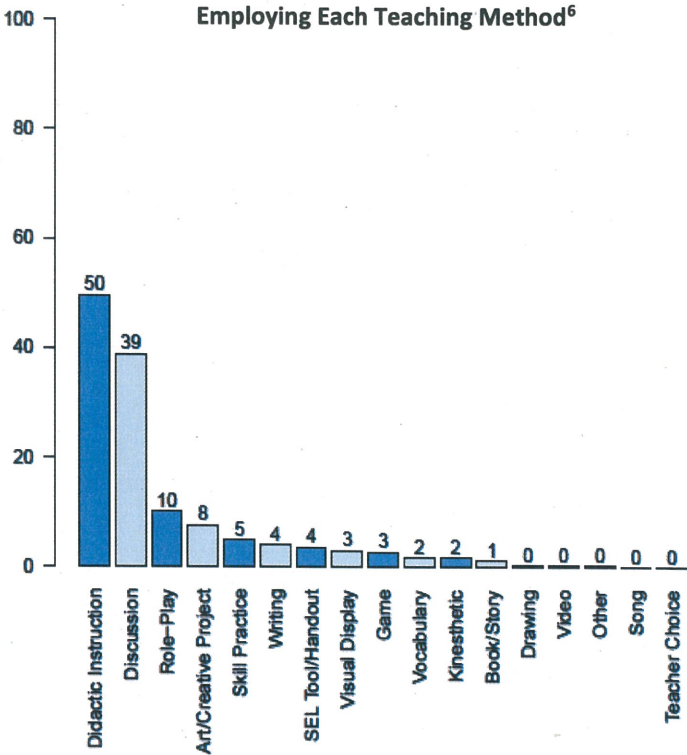
A1 = Total % of program activities targeting each skill (e.g., attention control, conflict resolution, etc.)

A2 = Total % of program activities targeting each domain (e.g., cognitive regulation, emotional processes, etc.)

PRIMARY METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

As shown in Figure 5 to the right, the most commonly used instructional method in Mutt-i-grees is didactic instruction (used in 50% of program activities), followed by discussion (39%). Didactic instruction is used to explain and review concepts and skills at the beginning and end of lessons, and most lessons contain a class discussion that helps students explore and expand on new ideas. These discussions are frequently interspersed with additional didactic instruction as teachers build upon student answers to further elaborate on lesson concepts. All other activity types appear in ≤10% of Mutt-i-grees activities.

Figure 5. Percentage of Program Activities Employing Each Teaching Method⁶



⁶ Program activities may employ two instructional methods simultaneously (e.g., using a visual display like a poster to facilitate a discussion). For this reason, the proportions of program activities employing each instructional method may not add up to 100%.

IV. PROGRAM COMPONENTS



Classroom Activities Beyond Core Lessons

- Each core lesson includes a list of related readings/resources and provides an advanced activity that can be used to supplement or build on lesson themes.
- Every unit includes three extension lessons (15 total) that introduce students to more complex concepts and activities related to the unit theme.
- Mutt-i-grees also offers a supplementary Paws Down, Tails Up physical fitness kit, which can be used in conjunction with the core curriculum. The kit includes animal-themed warm ups, cool downs, and games designed to promote fitness alongside social-emotional competence. Activities can be used during Mutt-i-grees lessons and classroom transitions, or as behavior management tools throughout the day.
- Mutt-i-grees also provides a Club Activities packet that includes a series of service learning and community outreach lessons aligned with unit themes that can be used to supplement the core curriculum for students in Grades 4-8.



Climate and Culture Supports

- The Mutt-i-grees website provides suggestions for ways in which teachers and students can use the program to enhance school climate, such as making bulletin boards or creating a program-inspired motto and using it to decorate posters, T-shirts, and buttons that can be shared with other students, staff, and families.
- No school-wide activities provided.



Applications to Out-of-School Time

- Mutt-i-grees is designed to be used across a variety of out-of-school-time settings, including afterschool and mentoring programs. The program's supplementary Paws Down, Tails Up kit in particular includes physical activities and games ideal for use in afterschool, YMCA, and summer programs.
- Local animal shelters and public libraries may purchase an Animal Shelter Guide or a Mutt-i-grees in the Library extension kit, which provide activity plans, service learning activities, crafts, stories, and books that shelter staff and librarians can use to connect with schools, families, and community-based organizations and engage them in social and emotional learning and humane education.



Adaptability to Local Context

- Lessons are scripted and all themes and lessons must be taught in order; however, teachers are not required to implement all activities included in each lesson. They are instead encouraged to use only those that best suit their teaching style and the developmental needs of their students, and to treat lesson scripts as blueprints to be customized as they see fit using resources from the Mutt-i-grees website, such as book lists, discussion topics, shelter dog profiles, and more.
- Mutt-i-grees can be used as a stand-alone program or in conjunction with other character education, life skills, service learning, bullying prevention, health education, pre-school, mentoring, or afterschool programs.
- The curriculum can be used in mainstream, inclusion, or special education classrooms, and is designed to accommodate students who have autism as well as other behavioral and developmental differences. Schools may also purchase supplemental lessons for students with special needs.



Professional Development and Training

- Mutt-i-grees encourages administrators to submit an online request for an on-site staff development training delivered by a team of experienced educators and Mutt-i-grees program staff.
- Mutt-i-grees also hosts optional conferences and training workshops throughout the country.



Support for Implementation

- Mutt-i-grees suggests that schools appoint a Mutt-i-grees coordinator or lead staff member to provide technical assistance to teachers, suggest resources, arrange staff development trainings, and serve as a parent liaison.
- Teachers also have access to a classroom implementation checklist as well as the Mutterville online community where educators can engage in professional networking and share ideas, tips, and resources for implementation.
- Participants also receive the Mutt-i-grees Newsletter, which highlights the best practices of exemplary classrooms, schools, and communities.



Tools to Assess Student Outcomes

- No information provided.



Tools to Assess Implementation

- A classroom implementation checklist is available for teachers.



Family Engagement

- Each lesson includes a parent letter that provides an overview of the lesson topic as well as ways for parents to reinforce lesson concepts outside of school.
- Many lessons also provide short, optional family involvement activities that allow students to share what they are learning in the classroom with their families and practice key social and emotional skills at home.
- Schools are encouraged to host informational sessions or presentations for parents before beginning the curriculum and to invite parents to participate in lessons during the school day.



Community Engagement

- Schools are encouraged to collaborate with local shelters to incorporate dogs into lessons and provide students with opportunities for shelter-based community service.
- Many lessons include supplementary community involvement activities that introduce students to local resources and agencies and help them explore what it means to have social responsibility and make a difference in their communities.
- Supplementary Mutt-i-grees Club Activities also provide opportunities for students to connect with their community through service learning and outreach projects.

V. HOW DOES IT COMPARE?

COMPARISON SNAPSHOT

Skill Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately high focus on understanding social cues <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately low focus on cognitive regulation
Instructional Methods	<input type="checkbox"/> High use of didactic instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately high use of art/creative projects
Program Components	<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive OST adaptations <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive support for community engagement <input type="checkbox"/> No support for academic integration

For more information about programs with common features, please see Summary Tables in Section 3.

Note: All comparisons are relative to other programs included in our analysis.

SKILL FOCUS⁷

Relative to other programs, Mutt-i-grees places a moderately low emphasis on cognitive regulation (15% below the cross-program mean). It provides a fairly typical focus on emotional processes (8% above the mean), character (6% below the mean), and mindset (1% above the mean). Although Mutt-i-grees focuses most frequently on interpersonal skills (targeted in 56% of program activities), it does so at a fairly typical rate relative to other programs (only 6% above the mean); however, it does provide a moderately high focus on understanding social cues (14% above the mean).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS⁷

Mutt-i-grees has the highest use of didactic instruction of all 25 programs (40% above the cross-program mean); it is used in 50% of all Mutt-i-grees program activities, as teachers explain dog behaviors and elaborate on lesson concepts with students. It also offers a moderately high use of art and creative projects relative to other programs (5% above the mean).

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Relative to other programs, unique aspects of Mutt-i-grees include its out-of-school time (OST) adaptations and comprehensive support for community engagement.

Applications to OST: While approximately half of all programs (n=14; 56%) are either designed to be applicable to – or have been successfully adopted in – OST settings, Mutt-i-grees is one of only two programs (8%), along with Too Good for Violence, to offer separate, structured activities for OST contexts.

Community Engagement: Mutt-i-grees is one of only seven programs (28%) to offer highly structured opportunities for students to connect with their community, including supplementary community involvement and service-learning activities.

Mutt-i-grees also offers less **support for academic integration** than most other programs (n=19; 76%). For a detailed breakdown of how Mutt-i-grees compares to other programs across all program component categories, please see Table 3 on p. 37-38.

⁷ For more information on how skill focus and instructional method comparisons were made, please see the Data Analysis Section of Appendix B.

VI. PURCHASING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Purchasing Information

To learn how to bring Mutt-i-grees to your school, please complete the online form at <http://education.muttigrees.org/contact>, or use the contact information provided below.

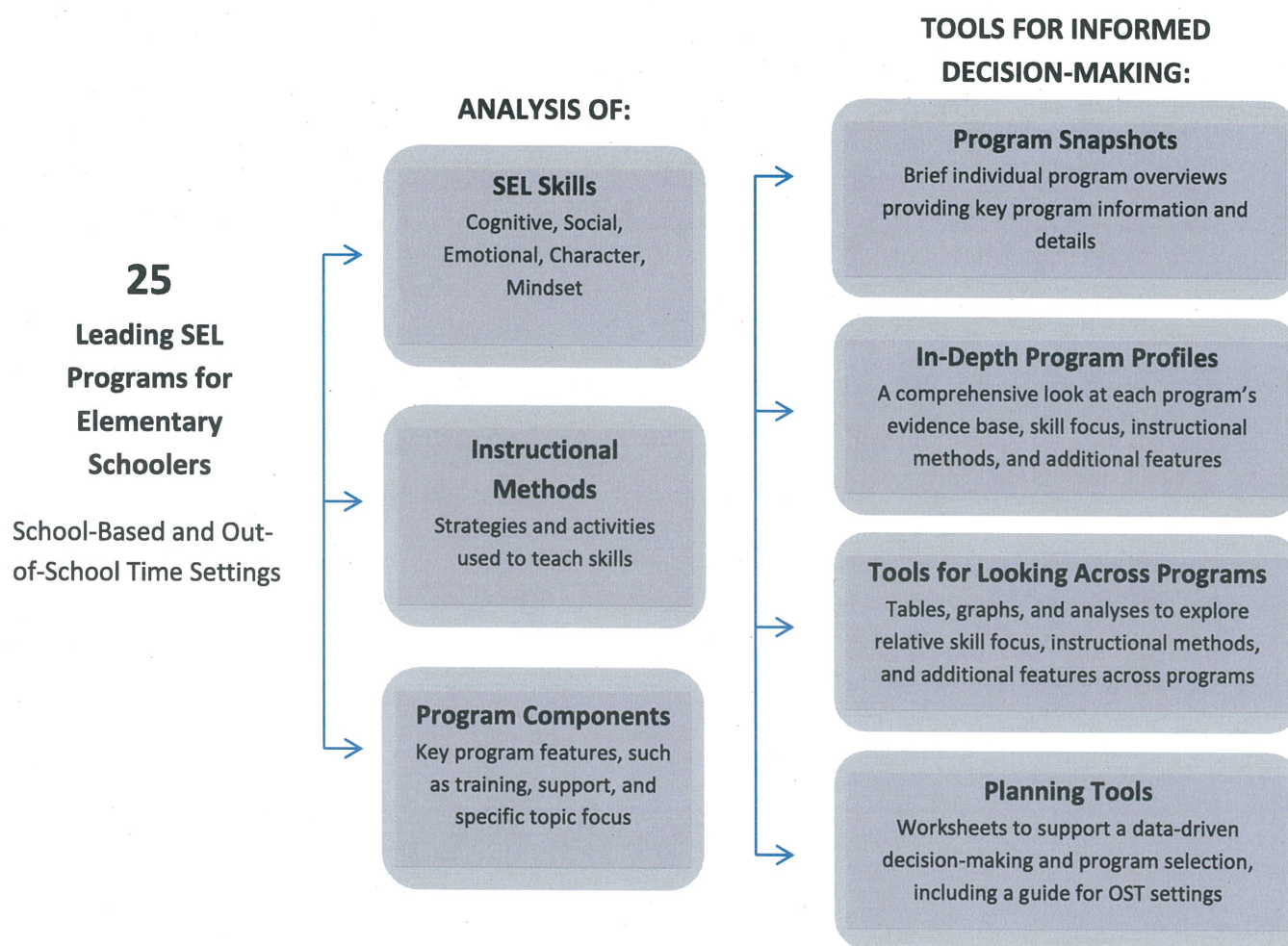
Contact Information

Website:	http://education.muttigrees.org/
Phone:	203-432-9944 or 515-883-7900, ext. 225

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE?

Detailed Description of Curricular Content

This report builds upon and complements other existing tools in the field (e.g., the CASEL Guide) to provide a more in-depth content analysis of leading SEL and character education programs. Most other resources focus primarily on identifying evidence-based SEL programs for use in schools and summarizing their major components. In contrast, this report offers a detailed look at the specific skills targeted, instructional methods used, and programmatic features offered by each program, and is more explicitly designed to enable schools and OST organizations to look across programs and easily identify those that best align with their focus, needs, and goals.



The level of detail provided in this report is intended to support schools and OST organizations to think explicitly about which approaches to SEL are most adaptable, feasible, and available for their particular settings, as well as whether or not and how particular approaches meet their specific

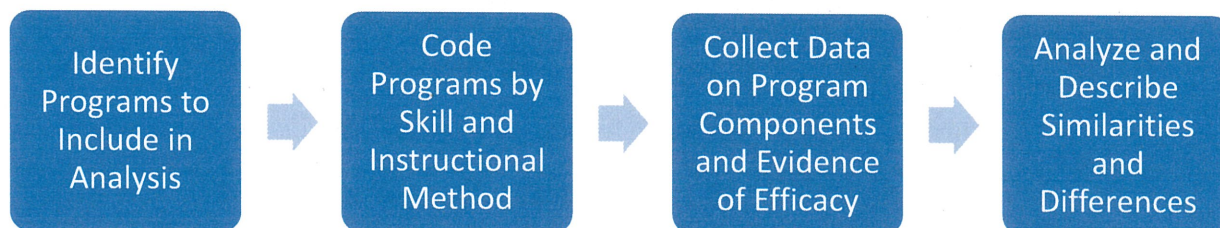
mission and goals. Furthermore, it provides schools and OST programs that may not be able to access or afford pre-packaged SEL programs with a basic overview of the types of skills, strategies, trainings, and implementation supports typically offered in leading SEL programs, offering a foundation from which to build their own independent approach to SEL.

Attention to Out-of-School Time Settings

This report is also distinct in the attention it gives to SEL programming in OST settings. There are few examples of evidence-based SEL programs that have been specifically designed for OST contexts, yet there are many reasons to believe that a more explicit partnership between these fields might benefit children and youth, not the least of which is that many emerging best practices in the field of afterschool and OST programming align with the central goals of SEL. For that reason, we include program profiles for three SEL programs designed for OST settings, rate school-based programs on their adaptability to OST settings, and provide a set of guiding principles and considerations designed to assist OST programs in selecting or adapting SEL programs that best meet their needs.

METHODOLOGY

This report is the product of a detailed content analysis of 25 leading SEL and character education programs commissioned by the Wallace Foundation and conducted by a research team at the Harvard Graduate School Education led by Dr. Stephanie Jones.



Research Process

Our research process included the following:

- (1) Fifteen programs were initially selected for inclusion based on relevance to the project, diversity of focus and approach, and accessibility of program materials. Ten additional programs were added at a later date for their broader focus on character education or OST settings for a total of 25 programs. Program materials were made available to us either by permission of the author or through purchase online.

- (2) To conduct the content analysis we developed and employed a rigorous coding system to capture whether and how each program targets SEL outcomes across five domains (cognitive, social, emotional, character, and mindset) and 12 concrete skills (e.g., inhibitory control, emotion knowledge/expression, conflict resolution, empathy/perspective-taking, and more) by looking inside program curricula to identify the specific skills targeted and instructional methods (e.g., books, discussion, drawing, songs, etc.) used within each discrete activity. It is important to note that our coding system was designed to code only the explicit or concrete activities in which a skill was directly targeted or taught, with the intention of making as few inferences as possible. It is therefore possible that programs may also build additional, underlying skills. For example, one might argue that any activity requiring children to listen to others during a discussion involves practicing some form of attention control; however, our coding system was not designed to reflect this form of implicit skill-building.
- (3) We then used a standardized process to collect and summarize information about high-level program features and evidence of effectiveness.
- (4) Using these data, we created detailed program profiles that summarize each program's domain focus, instructional methods, and program features. We also conducted a cross-program analysis to highlight key areas of overlap and variation across programs.

After an initial internal review, this material was reviewed by a number of stakeholders in the field: multiple drafts were submitted to the Wallace Foundation and six external reviewers (including experts in social-emotional development, funders, and school leaders) for feedback on content, methodology, and presentation. In addition, each program developer was contacted and invited to review the following information included in their Program Snapshot: (a) program description, (b) grade range, (c) duration/timing, (d) areas of focus, and (e) additional/supplementary curricula. Of the 25 programs, 23 responded.

For a detailed description of our methodology, including the program selection criteria and coding/data collection system, please see Appendices B and C, respectively.

12 Social and Emotional Skills Linked to Child Outcomes

Cognitive Skills

Attention Control	The ability to attend to relevant information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions and shifting tasks when necessary, such as listening to the teacher and ignoring kids outside on the playground.
Inhibitory Control	The ability to suppress or modify a behavioral response in service of attaining a longer-term goal by inhibiting automatic reactions like shouting out an answer while initiating controlled responses appropriate to the situation such as remembering to raise one's hand.
Working Memory and Planning Skills	Working memory refers to the ability to cognitively maintain and manipulate information over a relatively short period of time, and planning skills are used to identify and organize the steps or sequence of events needed to complete an activity and achieve a desired goal.
Cognitive Flexibility	The ability to switch between thinking about two different concepts to thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously, or to redirect one's attention away from one salient object, instruction, or strategy to another.

Emotional Skills

Emotion Knowledge and Expression	The ability to recognize, understand, and label emotions in oneself and others (emotion knowledge) and to express one's feelings in contextually appropriate ways (emotion expression).
Emotion and Behavior Regulation	The ability to use effortful control strategies to modify the intensity or duration of emotional arousal, both positive and negative (emotion regulation) as well as the ability to learn and conform to expectations for appropriate social behavior (behavior regulation).
Empathy and Perspective-Taking	The ability to understand another person's emotional state and point of view. This includes identifying, acknowledging, and acting upon the experiences, feelings, and viewpoints of others, whether by placing oneself in another's situation or through the vicarious experiencing of another's emotions.

Interpersonal Skills

Understanding Social Cues	The process through which children interpret cues from their social environment and use them to understand the behaviors of others.
Conflict Resolution/Social Problem-Solving	The ability to generate and act on effective strategies or solutions for challenging interpersonal situations and conflicts.
Prosocial Skills	The skills required to organize and navigate social relationships, including the ability to interact effectively with others and develop positive relationships. Includes a broad range of skills and behaviors such as listening/communication, cooperation, helping, community-building, and being a good friend.

Additional Skills

Character	A set of culturally determined skills, values, and habits required to understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values (e.g., respect, justice, citizenship, responsibility for self and others) and to perform to one's highest potential in achievement or work contexts, such as perseverance, diligence, and self-control.
Mindset	Attitudes and beliefs about oneself, others, and one's own circumstances that impact one's interpretation of and response to events and interactions throughout their day.

For a list of behaviors associated with each skill, please see p. 314-323 of the Coding Guide in Appendix C.